

of our commanders to conduct operations in the field and infringe on the President's authority as Commander in Chief.

So this is the same flexibility that allowed the Commander in Chief to surge forces and turn the tide in Iraq. I am one of those who personally observed the changes that took place in Iraq with the surge. It was about a year ago right now. I recall a report where our intelligence was actually attending all the weekly Friday mosque meetings, and at that time, my recollection is 85 percent of those messages given by the imams and the clerics were anti-American messages. That stopped in April, and they realized things are working there. There is so much talk about the political leaders, I kind of look at the religious leaders as part of the reason for the successes we have had.

So I think we have already voted on these. They have been voted down, and we don't need to waste any more time on it. I think common sense—when we sit on the Senate Armed Services Committee, as we did this morning, and we looked at the brilliant generals who were testifying before us, such as General Casey, these people spend a lifetime knowing what is going on and how to negotiate wars. We are winning. Things are good right now. I have often thought—I was honored in 1991 to be on the first freedom flight back to Kuwait. At that time, the Iraqis didn't know the war was over. They were still burning the fields. I remember going into one of the houses that actually was the Ambassador to the United States from Kuwait, a family of nobility, going into their home. They wanted to see what it looked like. Saddam Hussein had used it for one of his headquarters, and the little daughter going up to her bedroom to see what it looked like, they had used her bedroom for a torture chamber. The unimaginable things that were going on over there: Looking into the mass graves. I would think that those individuals on the other side, if nothing more—if that were all there were to it—would say we have to finish. It is our humanitarian responsibility.

We are experiencing a victory, the surge is working, and I hope we will be able to dispose of, in a very quick way, these two bills authored by Senator FEINGOLD.

I yield the floor.

RECESS

There being no objection, the Senate, at 12:40 p.m., recessed until 2:25 p.m., and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. CARPER).

PROVIDING FOR THE SAFE REDEPLOYMENT OF UNITED STATES TROOPS FROM IRAQ—MOTION TO PROCEED

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Who yields time?

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, as we take up the issue of Iraq once again, the question that should be foremost in our minds is this: Has the situation improved since the Petraeus plan was put into place? And if so, if the terrorists who have been murdering coalition and Iraqi soldiers and civilians there for years are now seriously wounded and on the run, as we are told they are, then the obvious followup question is this: How do we ensure that the progress not only continues but actually lasts?

Our friends on the other side never seem to let the facts get in the way of their proposals for securing Iraq. When the President announced a new counterinsurgency strategy last year, many of them said it would not work. Even the plan's most vocal critics voted to confirm the general who would carry it out. The junior Senator from Illinois embodied this approach when he predicted: The President's strategy will not work, and then cast a vote confirming General Petraeus for the job. Then, when General Petraeus returned from Iraq to report that the strategy was bearing fruit, some of our friends on the other side covered their ears and questioned his integrity.

The junior Senator from New York embodied this view when she said the general's report required "a willing suspension of disbelief," then voted against a resolution that condemned an ad accusing him of lies. And now, after months of positive reports on improved safety and even important political progress, some of our friends on the other side once again want to cut funding for the troops.

In the words of the first Feingold bill that we might be voting on, they want to "promptly transition the mission." They want to tear up the Petraeus plan and cut off funds for the very troops who are carrying it out.

The second Feingold bill is just as odd. It would require the Bush administration, now in its final months, to set out a new global strategy for fighting terrorism even as our military fights the terrorists neighborhood by neighborhood in Iraq and even as congressional Democrats continue to block a bipartisan surveillance bill that we know would improve our ability to disrupt terrorist plots. The second Feingold bill would also require reducing the pace of deployments and an increase in overall military readiness. This would mean not only full funding for the Defense Department but also directing an even greater share of the Nation's resources to defense—some-

thing the junior Senator from Wisconsin has not been known to champion in the past.

In other words, the second Feingold bill claims to advance an effective antiterrorist program even though the first one attempts to block a counterinsurgency plan that even early critics of the war are now calling a success. It calls for a new strategy against al-Qaida even while Democrats in the House block one of the most effective tools we have in the fight against al-Qaida.

All of which leads me to wonder, what possible deduction of reason has prompted our friends on the other side to believe either of these bills is a good idea? We already know what will happen to the first bill. Last year, we overwhelmingly rejected it—not just once but four times. It never achieved more than 29 votes. And that was before the success of the Petraeus plan.

But given what has happened since then, the proposal to cut funds, to scrap the Petraeus plan, makes even less sense today. Just consider what has taken place in Iraq over the last year.

Since the implementation of the Petraeus plan, violence in Iraq has fallen dramatically. Over the past year, civilian deaths are one-sixth of what they were in November of 2006. High-profile bombings are down by two-thirds since June. The discovery and seizure of guns and other weapons caches has more than doubled nationally and tripled in Anbar. The worst kind of violence is dramatically down. Ethno-sectarian conflict—the fighting has fallen from a peak of about 1,100 incidents in December of 2006 to about 100 such incidents this past November. That is less than 1 year. Locals are energized about fighting back against terrorists, with between 70,000 and 100,000 ordinary citizens stepping forward to help local police root out terrorists. And the terrorists themselves are becoming demoralized, with even those who share their religious beliefs driving them into hiding.

This kind of progress is changing minds. One harsh early critic of the war, Anthony Cordesman, recently visited Iraq, looked at the new data, and came to a different conclusion.

Here is what Anthony Cordesman says now:

No one can spend 10 days visiting the battlefields in Iraq without seeing major progress in every area. If the U.S. provides sustained support to the Iraqi Government, in security, governance, and development, there is now a very real chance that Iraq will emerge as a secure and stable state.

A very real chance that Iraq will emerge as a secure and stable state. These are the words of a man whose judgment our friends on the other side were appealing to just last year in arguing for withdrawal. Last July, the junior Senator from New Jersey, speaking on the Senate floor, cited the opinion of Mr. Cordesman before declaring: Mr. President, it is over; your